

VZCZCXRO0232
OO RUEHIK RUEHPOD RUEHYG
DE RUEHSF #0748 3311204
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 261204Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5579
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEADWD/DA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISI/HQ USEUCOM IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 1009

UNCLAS SOFIA 000748

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PREL MARR BU
SUBJECT: BULGARIA TO SIGN OSLO CONVENTION BUT WILL REMAIN
INTEROPERABLE

¶1. (SBU) Bulgaria intends to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo on December 3. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expert Lachezara Stoeva, in charge of the agreement, the MFA and MOD have consulted extensively and are completely in agreement that signature of the convention will not interfere with joint operations or Bulgaria's ability to meet its NATO commitments. Bulgaria strongly supported the inclusion of Article 21 to ensure that this was the case. Should any concerns about the use of cluster munitions in combined operations arise, Bulgaria will follow our suggestion and consult bilaterally with the United States.

¶2. (SBU) Comment: A high-level team from the U.S. defense firm Textron Systems met Bulgarian officials on November 25 and 26 to urge Bulgaria not to sign. Textron sells air-to-ground weapon systems (sensor fused weapons) that will be prohibited by the convention. The company representatives argued that Bulgaria has not had adequate time to assess whether it would want these systems for the F-16s it plans to obtain next year. The Bulgarians heard out Textron, but Stoeva said that Bulgaria still intends to sign the convention on December 3. Solomon Passy, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, however, is concerned about the potential impact of the convention on Bulgaria's F-16 program. He said he would ensure that this issue was explored fully once the agreement was sent to Parliament for ratification.

McEldowney